



Fern Ridge sunset on Willamette River.

BACKGROUND

Background

In his 1977 State of the Union address, President Clinton announced the American Heritage Rivers initiative to recognize and support local efforts to restore and protect America's rivers and river communities. The initiative would provide a more effective and coordinated delivery of existing federal services and resources through partnerships with state, local, and tribal governments, community and non-governmental organizations, and business. The President stressed that the voluntary community initiative would create no new regulatory requirements or other constraints on property owners or non-Federal government entities, and would not involve any new Federal controls on water or riparian resources. The President subsequently issued an Executive Order (E.O. 13061), directing the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and federal agencies to establish and implement the initiative.

CEQ later published an outline for the initiative and the process for selecting and designating rivers. A Federal Advisory Committee was established to review nominations for the initiative and recommended rivers for designation by the President. President Clinton subsequently designated 14 American Heritage Rivers. If they so desired, designated river communities would have the use of a "River Navigator," a federal or federally funded professional, who would identify complementary programs and resources to further each community's vision for its river.

Federal Assistance

The American Heritage Rivers initiative has three inter-related objectives: natural resource and environmental protection, economic revitalization, and historic and cultural preservation. Executive Order 13061 specifically directs federal agencies to:

coordinate their "plans, functions, programs, and resources to preserve, protect, and restore rivers and their associated resources important to our history, culture, and natural heritage."

"...bring increased efficiencies to existing and authorized programs with goals that are supportive of protection and restoration of communities along rivers."

"...help identify resources in the private and nonprofit sectors to aid revitalization efforts" and, "to the extent permitted by law, to develop partnerships with State, local, and tribal governments and community and non-governmental organizations."

"...establish a method for field offices to assess the success of the American Heritage River initiative and provide a means to recommend changes that will improve the delivery and accessibility of Federal services and programs."

Good Neighbor Policy – A policy was developed as part of the initiative to ensure that the federal government makes every effort to be a good neighbor to local communities. This is accomplished through planning and decision-making that involves local communities. Through timely communication, communities and the federal government can ensure that any proposed federal action will reduce or eliminate conflicting policies and programs that affect designated rivers.

"The initiative has unified our river, and the first time, communities from different parts of the state are working together to celebrate this wonderful resource...because of this designation, local governments along the river have worked cooperatively toward the goal of restoring the river and improving their communities."
Mayor John Delaney, Jacksonville, FL

Impediments to Designations

"Despite the potential it holds for some of our Nation's treasured resources, the communities which have accepted designations under this initiative have been subjected to repeated efforts to undermine their intentions, primarily through the placement of funding restrictions on various agencies involved in this enterprise... These restrictions have been spawned in part by an undercurrent of concern among those who feel the initiative represents some sort of Federal intrusion into local matters. To this point, let me say this is simply not the case. Throughout the process, proponents of the initiative have gone to great lengths to ensure that local control is not circumvented. In fact, it should be argued that local control is not only preserved, but enhanced by an increased awareness of the options that are available through already existing programs."

U.S. Representative Sue Kelly, R-NY

When the American Heritage Rivers initiative was launched, some unanticipated issues of trust and ideology prevented communities from seeking AHR designation. Some Members of Congress and some community leaders - who had not imagined the federal government working so efficiently and unobtrusively with local stakeholders - met the initiative with varying degrees of suspicion or scorn.

Seeking to make some progress, the Administration accepted a compromise demanded by a few in Congress, whereby members who were opposed to the initiative could preclude rivers or segments of rivers within their districts from being considered for designation. After observing the success of the initiative in action, many of these river communities and elected officials have come around and embraced it.

"One of the best opportunities brought about by the American Heritage Rivers initiative is the opportunity to unite river users across the country. After a year and a half of observing the activities of this initiative, and numerous meetings with the River Navigator, the Mississippi River Headwaters Board voted unanimously to seek nomination."

Jane E. Van Hunnik, Director of the Mississippi Headwaters Board

Local Communities Benefit

PRESIDENTIAL RECOGNITION

The AHR designation brings special recognition by the President of the United States. The designation recognizes that the river and its communities have distinctive qualities and a high level of community support and commitment.

COORDINATED DELIVERY OF FEDERAL SERVICES

Assistance from the federal government to the designated river communities comes at the request of the community. Under the American Heritage Rivers initiative, the federal government recognizes the importance of designated community priorities. The assumption is that local residents know what is appropriate for their community. A team of federal agency representatives known as the AHR Workgroup helps to facilitate field activities to ensure this very important role of interagency coordination is carried out.

RIVER NAVIGATOR

A river navigator is a federally funded person, who is selected by the local communities and assigned to each river community. The river navigator serves as a federal liaison to the local communities, helping them to identify federal programs and grant opportunities that can further their community plan of action.

PRIVATE SECTOR OPPORTUNITIES

Administration support of local communities helps them leverage additional resources from the private sector, enhancing the communities' action plans.

"It puts decision making in the hands of local officials. It's an initiative requiring no new funds and no new mandates.

This is the kind of partnership we should encourage... this is a great example of how government should work."

U.S. Representative Corrine Brown (D-FL)

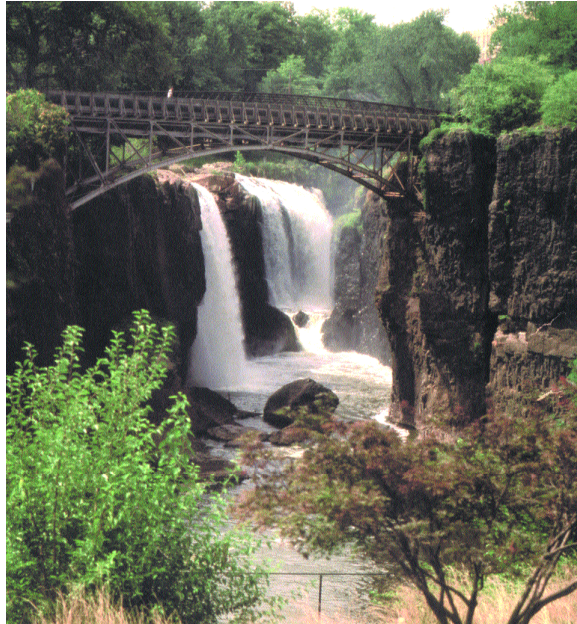


The Washington Monument - Potomac River

Agencies Respond to Community's Request for River Navigators

In assigning River Navigators, all participating federal agencies tried to have communities take part in the selection process, including defining the role of the River Navigator within each community. Within their missions, federal agencies used creativity in meeting communities' needs. For example, the Friends of the Potomac River requested that the National Park Service be the sponsoring agency for the river, but wanted an employee of the EPA to be the River Navigator. The two agencies agreed to this cooperative approach.

Likewise, the Hanalei River community preferred to have two coordinators. The Federal government's response was to fulfill the community's desire by providing grant funding for two part-time "coordinators" to navigate the activities of the Hanalei Heritage River program. The Coordinators were selected by a consensus in the community with the blessing of the sponsoring agency, the Forest Service.



Passaic River, nominated river



Bridge Walk, Little Rock, Arkansas - Arkansas River, nominated river



Puyallup Habitat Restoration Project - Passaic River, nominated river

All Rivers Benefit

FOCUSED ATTENTION ON ALL RIVERS

The initiative has highlighted the importance of rivers as part of local economies and how focusing attention on these great natural resources can bolster efforts to restore downtown waterfronts.

IMPROVED SERVICES TO ALL RIVER COMMUNITIES

An extensive database of federal resources, tools, and products was developed through the initiative. This database assists local communities with up to date information on federal programs and resources to benefit them. This database can be accessed through the web site at www.epa.gov/rivers

Building Community Capacity “The Hanalei Success Story”

“What we have in Hanalei is one of the most valuable biological, scenic and recreational resources in the entire world... it is the world’s image of paradise. If we loose these special places, we lose the essence of Hawaii.”

Governor Benjamin J. Cayetano (D-HI)



Scenic view of the Hanalei River

Hanalei is a community like no other in the world. Located on the pristine Island of Kauai – the northern most island in the Hawaiian chain Hanalei is often referred to as “paradise on earth.” The community’s most prized possession, the 16-mile Hanalei River, is home to nearly every species of native fish and a variety of crustaceans and snails. The water in the Hanalei River originates from the top of Mount Waialeale, the wettest spot on earth, and gently flows down to the mouth of the river towards Hanalei Bay. Toward Po’oku, a hill on the cliffs above the Hanalei River, there are always rainbows.

No one could predict that this ancient place of worship would be the scene of one of the most divisive issues in recent Hawaiian history. For nearly two decades a battle over the use of the Hanalei waterway divided community residents. A fast growing ecotourism industry dramatically increased the number of commercial boats using the serene waterway. Local residents were concerned that the small estuary – lacking any facilities at all – was entirely inappropriate for commercial boating activity. Some local entrepreneurs feared that the growing opposition to commercial activity on the waterway would threaten their livelihood.

Through the support of the American Heritage Rivers initiative and the U.S. Forest Service, a more unified approach is emerging. Each day a diverse group of community stakeholders strengthens and develops new partnerships bound by a unifying interest in preserving the unique natural resources and tranquil lifestyle along the Hanalei River. As a result of the designation of the Hanalei River as an American Heritage River, the community of Hanalei chose to follow local traditional practice and form a Hui (organization), to provide the leadership to coordinate local activities undertaken through the AHR initiative. Hui members are, by definition, those community members who participate. The Hui makes all decisions, except those governing staff elections, by consensus, a process that has proven both successful and gratifying.

*“The folks of Hanalei have long been committed to a community based process. The Hawaiian concept of watershed, **ahupua’a**, is stewardship guided by the Hawaiian principals of **malama ‘aina**, (sustainability), **pono**, (integrity and balance), **laulima** (cooperation), and **aloha**, especially as it applies to cultural equity and respect. The Hanalei River Hui embraces and supports those actions that are appropriate to this place and its heritage.”*

Makaala Kaaumoana, Program Coordinator for the Hanalei Heritage River Program.

Cutting Red Tape and Improving Access

HUDSON RIVER LIGHT STATIONS

Three light stations along the Hudson River have been cleared by the US Coast Guard (USCG) for transfer from federal ownership to State and non-profit groups for long-term caretaking. This decision came about after the State of New York and two Hudson River communities asked for help with the disposition of these historic sites. These Coast Guard properties—the Turkey Point Light Attendant Station, the Esopus Meadows (Middle Hudson River) Light Station, and the Rondout Creek (Kingston) Light Station—were all identified as needing long term stewardship and custodial care.

The USCG transfer of the Turkey Point Light Attendant Station to the State of New York has been a long sought after opportunity, initially started in 1976. The current state park that surrounds the station does not have adequate river access, and the addition of the 8-acre parcel will provide handicap access for fishing as well as primitive camping sites for the Hudson River Water Trail. In addition to the Turkey Point property, the Hudson River Navigator was asked to address the community's concern about obtaining a state grant for one of the Light Stations. He facilitated the transfer of ownership of the light station and another nearby.

The light station issues on the Hudson River became a top priority, “keystone” project, of the AHR initiative. Because of the grassroots-to-Washington structure of the AHR initiative, the AHR Task Force quickly set up a meeting with staff of the Secretary of Transportation and U.S. Coast Guard headquarters in Washington, DC, to discuss the delayed transfer process. Within a month, an agreement was reached between the USCG, General Services Administration (GSA), the State of New York, and the local Hudson organizations, and shortly thereafter the CSCG reported all three Hudson properties to GSA as excess property, enabling the transfers to proceed.

By facilitating communication among decision-makers at all levels, AHR initiative has demonstrated its ability to serve river communities.

“The Hudson River is a historic, cultural, and natural treasure that has been integral to our growth as a Nation and has served as an inspiration to artists, anglers, and conservationists.”

Governor George E. Pataki (R-NY)



Hanalei residents preparing for river designation ceremony

BACKGROUND

Bipartisan Agreement Protects Timucuan Preserve Jacksonville, Florida

The Administration successfully negotiated a \$2 million bipartisan agreement to increase public ownership of land inside the boundary of the Timucuan Preserve in Jacksonville, FL. Established in 1988, the preserve encompasses 46,000 acres, approximately 75 percent of which is open water or salt marsh. At present, it is a patchwork of private inholdings in between areas owned and protected by local, state, federal, and private organizations. Only 7,500 acres are owned by the National Park Service, with adjacent private lands highly vulnerable to the development of strip malls and other growth pressures.

Without the highest level of attention on this local request for acquisition funding, facilitated by the American Heritage Rivers initiative, it would have been lost among thousands of federal funding requests. The citizens of Jacksonville were able to raise this project to the highest executive level of government, cut red tape, and work together to achieve a better environment. Representatives Tillie Fowler (R) and Corrine Brown (D) and Jacksonville Mayor John Delaney (R) were strong advocates in convincing the Congress and the Administration to move forward.

Jacksonville is the largest city in the southeast, with a rapidly growing population. Yet, flowing through downtown central is a river of national importance, the St. Johns River, designated as an American Heritage River. The St. Johns originates in Indian River County and flows approximately

310 miles north through Jacksonville before emptying into the Atlantic Ocean. The river and its watershed are significant for their history of Native American settlements with archaeological remains dating before 2000 B.C., and well preserved examples of early African-American plantation life. At the delta of the river lies the national treasure of the Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve – one of the last unspoiled coastal wetlands and oak hammocks on the Atlantic Coast.

Development pressures have increased since the construction of a bridge across the St. Johns River, improving access to the Timucuan area. Mayor Delaney and the National Park Service have long wanted to purchase additional land in these sensitive habitats. The wetlands there function to store floodwater, critically important in this extremely flat watershed that is highly susceptible to hurricanes and other flood events. Developing these floodplains would increase the flood risk for the entire Jacksonville community, so their long-term protection is in the economic best interest of the area. The local community has worked to protect the mouth of the St. Johns River with a combination of state, federal, and private (The Nature Conservancy) land protection. Protecting the remnant areas will keep the Timucuan Preserve one of the Nation's premier unperturbed ecosystems, preserving the scenic beauty for generations to come.

Upper Susquehanna-Lackawanna River Team Earns Vice-President's Award for Reinventing Government

The Pennsylvania GIS Consortium (PAGIS) was one of only six teams from across the country to receive the prestigious Hammer Award from Vice President Gore's National Partnership for Reinventing Government in the fall of 2000. PAGIS is a new not-for-profit organization established in the Upper Susquehanna-Lackawanna American Heritage River watershed to advance environmental clean-up projects and economic development. The award was presented to PAGIS for its success in turning a deluge of digital data into useful maps to help local communities control flooding, clean up pollution, plan growth, and prevent crime.

"Innovative communities—like those recognized today—are showing how this kind of mapping can help solve their toughest problems. Today's maps can represent every dimension of a community—its area, its resources, its infrastructure, the quality of the air and water—all the things that make a community livable. Maps can capture information that helps communities plan and helps them protect the safety of each citizen," said Vice President Gore.

PAGIS' principal work focuses on geographic information systems (GIS), which store, integrate, analyze, and display extensive data (including

population, roads, utilities, pollution sources, streams and rivers, wetlands, soils, and vegetation) and blend them with data from aerial photography, satellites, and the global positioning system (GPS).

Hammer Awards are bestowed to individuals, organizations, and government agencies by Vice President Gore's National Partnership for Reinventing Government, established in 1993 to find ways to make government work better, cost less, and get results Americans care about. The awards are named for the hammers that once cost the government \$400 because of cumbersome purchasing procedures that were eliminated as part of government reinvention.



Dr. Dale Bums, Professor, Wilkes University,
Dr. Christopher Breiseth, President, Wilkes University,
Vice President Al Gore, Rep. Paul Kanjorski.

Corps of Engineers Streamlines Policy Review for Communities Partnership Agreements

The internal review process of these proposals was often impeding. In an attempt to be a good neighbor to river communities, the Corps decentralized its review process and delegated some signing authority to the district level, thereby delivering local community agreements in a timely more efficient manner. The streamlining of its policy review by the Army's Corps of Engineers is an important development for the river communities. This innovation sets benchmarks and describes the roles of, and the relationships between, federal and local river partners.

Good Neighbor

As part of the "Good Neighbor" policy adopted by the American Heritage Rivers initiative, federal agencies were encouraged to assist communities by providing technical assistance, public access, and physical space in order to support the river communities' plan of action.

In Region 6 of the General Services Administration, under the leadership of the Regional Director, John Poulard, the federal government's principal real estate owner/manager, has led the way in the "Good Neighbor" effort, providing office space for the Rio Grande and Lower Mississippi river AHR. In addition, GSA has also provided such basic equipment as vehicles, laptop computers, and cell phones, on-loan from its procurement inventory, as well as other resources to help navigators serve the communities and serve them better, faster and more efficiently.

The General Services Administration (GSA), under the leadership of Thurman Davis, Deputy Administrator of GSA, coordinated efforts among GSA regions to secure office space for other river navigators and community partners. For example, the GSA provided approximately 3,800 square feet of much needed office space in the District of Columbia to the Potomac AHR through an agreement between the National Park Service and the Friends of the Potomac.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is providing office space and support for Willamette Restoration Initiative (WRI) staff, the primary community partner for the Willamette River. WRI was faced with losing space in their previous location. BLM, the host agency for the AHR designation, stepped in to provide the office space and modest administrative support.